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RESTORATION REVIEW

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ROBERT MEYERS

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In his eulogy of the King James version as, apparently, the only trustworthy translation, Mr. Wallace actually equates it in his final paragraph with the Bible itself. This will be particularly disturbing to Church of Christ Bible teachers who have been trying patiently for years to distinguish between the Bible, as originally composed, and all subsequent and varying versions of it.

It may be that this strange regression to a 1611 version is part of a fear reaction to the new attitudes now spreading among Churches of Christ. It is usual in such cases not only to hang on to the present but to hark back nostalgically to childhood. Mr. Wallace speaks fondly of the beautiful rhythms of the King James version and of his having memorized long ago the "precious passages". I feel sympathy for him, for I did my memorizing from that version, too, and its rhythms still seem magnificent to me. I also understand his remembering those happy days when he had no peer as an expounder of the interpretations of the Church of Christ. It must seem to him that the particular religious group he defended so ardently for years has vanished in dense fog and has to be groped for as in dreams.

But my sympathy cannot lessen my dismay at his charge that the new versions are really only perversions. That they are imperfect all of us would readily admit, but for the modern student they are superior to the King James version in a multitude of ways. I should hope that Mr. Wallace will not obscure that fact for too many young men and women growing up in Church of Christ homes where his name is honored.

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Mr. Wallace’s chastisement of modern versions reminds me of another rebuke made once by a famed Hebrew scholar against the new version of his day. He said that he “would rather be torn asunder by wild horses than allow such a version to be imposed on the Church.” He argued that in fifteen verses of Luke 3, the translators had fifteen score of idle words to account for in the day of judgment. He thought that the sponsor of the version would one day see the man who oversaw it in hell, suffering for his leadership. He felt that the older version he already knew and used was better and that only evil could come from a new translation.

The man I have just quoted was Hugh Broughton. His comments were written to King James. The version he was excoriating was the King James. Only the dates and the names are different, you see; men have always been reluctant to let go of the old. Broughton would surely have been surprised could he have known that in 1967 some men would be holding up the King James version as the only one that preserves the purity of the church.

Perhaps the most ironic error in Mr. Wallace's reasoning is suggested by my title. When a man exalts the King James version he should be asked, Which King James version do you have in mind? For there have been several revisions of the translation made in 1611. One was made quickly in 1613, but shows more than 400 variations from the first edition. Broughton himself helped spark a major revision in 1629. There was a minor one in 1638. The major changes came in the eighteenth century. Dr. Thomas Paris did an extensive revision at Cambridge in 1762 and Dr. Benjamin Blayney did another at Oxford in 1759, spending four years in modernizing punctuation, spelling, and misleading expressions. Edgar J. Goodspeed, whose scholarship Mr. Wallace would not likely question, states flatly that there are 75,000 differences between our present King James versions and the original of 1611. It would be interesting to know which version Mr. Wallace considers the *real* one, for if he allows constant modernizing of the King James he can hardly disallow other efforts to make the Bible relevant to new generations.

It has seemed to me for years that it would be helpful if Bible teachers held short courses in the art of translation. They would not need to be Greek scholars. Any foreign language would do for illustrative purposes. If they did not themselves know any language besides English, they could almost always find persons in their classes who did and who could assist them. A few weeks of instruction in the art of translating would guarantee that exposed students would not be in danger of taking such essays as Mr. Wallace's seriously.

One of the most perceptive comments I have seen about translation problems is made by John Ciardi, American poet, literary critic, and translator of Dante's *Divine Comedy.* It should be remembered, in reading his comments, that an enormous part of the Bible is poetry, which is especially difficult to translate into another language. Here are his words:

"When the violin repeats what the piano has just played, it cannot make the same sounds and it can only approximate the same chords. It can, however, make recognizably the same 'music', the same air. But it can do so only when it is as faithful to the self-logic of the violin as it is to the self-logic of the piano.

"Language too is an instrument, and each language has its own logic. I believe that the process of rendering from language to language is better conceived as a 'transposition' than as a 'translation', for 'translation' implies a series of word-for-word equivalents that do not exist across language boundaries any more than piano sounds exist in the violin.

"The motion of word-for-word equivalents also strikes me as false to the nature of poetry. Poetry is not made of words but of word-complexes, elaborate structures involving, among other things, denotations, connotations, rhythms, puns, juxtapositions, and echoes of the tradition in which the poet is writing."

One of the principal faults of the King James is that its translators believed too strongly in trying for word-for-word equivalents. Their distorted literalism got them into awkward situations repeatedly and they produced a version which, particularly in the New Testament, bore little resemblance in tone and style to the original. It is now known that the word-for-word method cannot provide the best translations. If Mr. Ciardi does not make this clear, the reader has only to consider the difficulty of translating the English idiom "flat busted" (meaning financially insolvent) into French prose. No American has any trouble with this common idiom, but it is impossible to carry all its nuances across into a foreign tongue. Koine Greek had its own idioms, like any other language, and only an idiomatic translation can come close to doing it justice. Anyone who wants dramatic proof of this may read Luke 18:5 in the King James and then study the racily colloquial expression which is actually used in the original Greek.

The King James, despite its matchless rhythms, has far too many flaws for the modern, serious Bible student. Its over-literalism is the major one, but the minor ones include its lack of a systematic approach to measurements (coinage is translated into British equivalents but is often left vague; cf. "pieces of silver" in Luke 15:8 or "piece of money" in Matt. 17:27, although the original is quite definite in these places); its failure to bring the Old and New Testaments into harmony on such details as spelling proper names (Noah-Noe, Elijah-Elias, Isaiah-Esaias, Hosea-Osee) , which creates needless difficulties for beginners; and its many archaisms and textural blunders, including such famed misprints as "strain at a gnat" in Matt. 23:23, intended by the translators to read "strain *out* a gnat,"

Too-ardent defenders of the King James should also remember that it printed the Apocrypha without qualification of its value as Scripture. If the *real* King James version is the one printed in 1611, Mr. Wallace should insist that the Apocrypha be included in it on the same terms as were expressed in that edition. A bible without the Apocrypha is not a true King James version. It not only included those books without scruple and took them seriously, but in 1615 one of the committee members, Archbishop Abbot, forbade the sale of Bibles not including the Apocrypha on pain of a year's imprisonment.

The truth is that the King James committee was not eager to translate a radically different version. One of their fifteen specific guidance rules stated that they were to follow the Bishops Bible, altering it as little "as the truth of the original will permit." Since the Bishops was based on the Great Bible, and the Great goes back heavily to Tyndale, it is estimated that about ninety per cent of the King James is Tyndalian. It might make more

sense for Mr. Wallace to urge us back to Tyndale and Wycliffe, or better yet to the earliest Anglo-Saxon Gospels of about 1000 A.D. If it is ancient English we want, we cannot be better served than by returning all the way to the very wellsprings of translations in that tongue. It may be that thousands cannot read Old or Middle English, of course, but I can find thousands today who cannot read King James English either. If Mr. Wallace or others feel I am overstating, I should be happy to furnish results of college tests given to secular and Christian college students to determine how perceptively they could read King James' sixteenth century English Bible.

It is too bad that the original Preface is not printed with the King James. In it, one of the translators, Miles Smith, tried to conciliate those lovers of earlier English versions who might be offended by the new one. "Truly (good Christian reader) we never thought from the beginning that we should need to make a new Translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one, . . . but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones, one principal good one. . ." The Committee was obviously under no illusion that it was producing the definitive version for *all time*, but only that it was doing for its own age a competent job of compilation and correction.

Some of the motives for the King James were probably not so noble as that. There was terrific rivalry between the Bishops Bible and the Geneva Bible. Since it was occasioning turbulence in the realm, James thought a new translation might help. It is believed that he may have been personally vexed by some marginal notes in the popular Geneva version. (An example is in 2 Chron. 15:16, which says that Asa "removed his mother from being queen because she had made an idol in a grove." The marginal comments says: "Herein he showed that he lacked zeal, for she ought to have died." James would remember his mother, the Queen of Scots. And a note on Exodus 1, in the margin, suggests that disobedience to the king of Egypt was "lawful" James had strong notions about the divine rights of kings; this note would have irked him).

The King James version grew out of specific needs for that day. It was a magnificent achievement and has been polished repeatedly since, so that generations of English-speaking peoples have drunk its words and rhythms in with their mothers' milk. But for the man in the street who needs the clearest prose he can find, it is not the best version, and for the serious student who needs the clearest prose he can find, it is not the best version, and for the serious student who seeks the results of three hundred and fifty years of Biblical scholarship, it is obviously a venerable and curious relic.

Mr. Wallace makes one astounding remark about the new versions. He says that the claim that they *simplify* the language of the Bible is sheer propaganda and is not true. "The reputed new versions are based on the Latin vocabulary which consists of long words. But the words of the old version, especially the King James Version, are the short words based on the Greek vernacular; and the Latin does not translate as simply as the King James

English." It is not easy to grapple with these comments, for they are as astonishingly erroneous as a man would be today who stood in a public place and affirmed that no man had ever rocketed into space.

The new versions are certainly *not* based on the Latin vocabulary. As a matter of fact, it is this Latin base which they seek to get away from. The King James was heavily dependent on a Latinate vocabulary; this is one of its faults. Here is an illustration: "For the administration of this service not only supplieth the wants of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; while by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men." (2 Cor. 9:12-13)

This passage fairly sags with the heaviness of its Latinic words. Try reading it aloud to hear its sonorous rhythms. When you do, observe how difficult it is for either you or your auditors to follow the thought. The Phillips version, on the other hand, simplifies this difficult passage: "For your giving does not end in meeting the wants of your fellow Christians. It also results in an overflowing tide of thanksgiving to God. Moreover, your very giving proves the reality of your faith and that means that men thank God that you practice the Gospel that you profess to believe in, as well as for the actual gifts you make to them and to others."

Which do you find easier to follow? Mr. Wallace says that "the comment that has been put into circulation that it is hard to understand [the King James version], is ludicrous—the Ph.D.'s want it simplified so they can understand it! But the new versions do not simplify anything—they rather confuse everything." This is so painfully inept that I must charge the editor of *First Century Christian* with not being fair to Mr. Wallace. He should have urged submission of another article on some subject about which Mr. Wallace could speak with authority.

I do not know why the Ph.D.'s seem so menacing to many now writing, unless it is the result of an overpowering fear that they may lead the Churches of Christ into the twentieth century, but it is especially ironic that Mr. Wallace should scoff at them. The very version he professes to admire above all others has been most extensively revised by Dr. Paris and Dr. Blayney. The original committee members were men with precisely the kind of formal training which confers the doctorate today. He is indebted to Ph.D.'s for the very translation he loves, yet he maligns them as stupid and arrogant men today. His inconsistency is even more apparent when he gladly quotes "Doctor Scott of the Northwestern University Seminary" when he finds that gentleman charging the translators of one modern version with dishonesty. This is a pattern of Church of Christism which has long been familiar to me. We *use* scholarship and authority when it supports us; we vilify and degrade it when it opposes us. How dare we speak of the arrogance of others?

If Mr. Wallace's article should seriously upset anyone, let him buy the little list of words edited by Luther Weigle, Dean Emeritus of Yale University Divinity School and chairman of the Standard Bible Committee. Entitled *Bible Words That Have Changed in Meaning,* it lists 857 terms in a graphic demonstration of how important it is to continue to translate the Bible into understandable modern English. Among words and phrases which have changed their meanings are these: *by and by* (in 1611 it meant *immediately); conversation* (in 1611 it meant *behavior); prevent* (in 1611 it meant *precede)* ; *outlandish* (in 1611 it meant *foreign).*

Some of the old King James spellings include moneth, fernace, charet, middes, thorow, souldiers, ancres, figge tree, oyle, ayre, creeple, Hierusalem, and Moyses. Fortunately, we have modernized these or Mr. Wallace would have even more difficulty getting twentieth century Americans to study from the King James.

If there is yet any doubt about whether modern versions really simplify, try 2 Cor. 6:12 out on the next passer-by in your block. "Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels." I could make a fortune wagering that nine out of ten average Americans would fumble the words "straitened" and "bowels" in this passage, without professional help. Of course, the King James version can be seen in one light as the Preacher's Best Friend anyway; he can spend about forty per cent of his time explaining to his class what words and sentences mean which, if read in a modern speech version, would be instantly clear to them. To argue that the King James is simple and clear as compared with the modern versions seems so willfully wrongheaded that I would not take time to respond to it except for my fear that some may give too credulous a hearing to men whose names have long been synonymous with "soundness."

We have had attacks on Church of Christ college teachers for some time now. They have been mounting in intensity, with suggestions that faculties should be purged of all but "sound" men. This bodes ill for those who seek to make the Church of Christ brotherhood significant in this century. No one is likely to pay serious attention to a group of people who purge their universities to be sure that no alien views corrupt the True Believers. But to argue seriously that the purity of the church is dependent on use of the King James version is even more ridiculous and can only do harm to those who labor to make the Church of Christ a contributing religious group in our time.—*Wichita State University, Wichita, Kan.*

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A RELUCTANT REJECTION

BILL HUCKABY

(Editor's Note: Believing as we do in the voice of dissent, we pass along these criticisms from one of our fine young princes. If we are wise, we will listen to such voices. Such criticisms need not all be valid in order to be of value to us. Mr. Huckaby is presently a teacher at Shelbyville High School, Shelbyville, Tenn. While at David Lipscomb College he was president of the student body and preached often for various Churches of Christ, intending at that time to become a Church of Christ minister. He has since changed his mind.)

Throughout my entire life I have worshipped and lived within the somewhat narrow fellowship of the church of Christ, and at the age of seventeen became a student at David Lipscomb College, a school supported by the churches of Christ. Four years later I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree having a major in Mathematics (60 hours) and a major in Bible (62 hours). I preached my first sermon while still in high school and since have preached in six different states, have spoken at numerous youth rallies and have participated in nine Campaigns for Christ sponsored by the churches of Christ, and was at one time the vice president of Mission Emphasis at David Lipscomb College.

All of this has been said to emphasize that I have a reasonable acquaintance with what the members of the church of Christ believe and practice. I know most of the arguments supporting their beliefs since I have used most of them myself at one time or another and have studied them continually for four years. And yet as early as 1962, while still in high school, there were questions in my mind regarding certain of our beliefs. I engaged in some religious discussions with a friend at school who seemed to me to be a Christian, but I knew he was not for he belonged to one of the denominations and all denominations were wrong (we referred to ourselves as nondenominational, though I slowly came to feel that we were more of a denomination than most other churches.) Since that time more and more questions have arisen, but few of them have been asked, since at Lipscomb one is looked upon as dangerous and radical if he dares to question the established beliefs or admit that he actually doubts what is to the church of Christ the "infallible truth." But one can coast along with such questions while in the sheltered arms of such a school, since a sort of idealism develops that is only shattered when exposed to real life. And after ten months away from Lipscomb my own idealism has been broken and I must rebuild on its ruins a more substantial foundation which can face the test of reality. Yet it is with reluctance that I must reject certain beliefs and practices which I have held almost my entire life for they have become almost a part of me. In many cases I don't know what to put in their place. I only know that the time has finally come that I can no longer remain silent. Just as the Springfield Presbytery, so well known in the annals of the Restoration Movement, dissolved itself into the universal Body of Christ, I must join them in recognizing myself as just a Christian and not a Church of Christ Christian. If that means that here and now I must be a Christian completely free from any group or that I must

work for Christ in another fellowship, that does not mean that in another place and under different circumstances I would not again work and worship within the church of Christ. On the contrary, I sincerely hope that the time will come that I can fully support all that the church of Christ stands for, and that they can accept me as a true Christian.

I must begin by admitting that I am not a scholar, and have never thought myself to be one. All I know is that, based on my limited experience and study, there are certain beliefs, attitudes and practices which are prevalent in the church of Christ which I cannot accept. They are the following:

1. Most of our doctrinal problems stem from our basic approach to the Bible which I feel is not justifiable. Since we have used it as a rulebook we have illustrated the truth of II Corinthians where Paul says that the letter kills while the Spirit gives life. We say others interpret and don't realize that we do the same. Our principle—that everything which is not specifically authorized is necessarily denied—is not even found in the Bible. Yet we use it to determine what is right and wrong and in so doing undermine the very purpose for which the Bible was written. It is interesting that so many men who have studied the Bible their entire lives have come to conclusions different from ours. We say they were not really looking for the truth and then we quickly add that sincerity is not enough. It is also a shame that so much history was included in the New Testament, for that could have been replaced by pages of rules and laws which would make it clear to everyone exactly what God wanted. And even Jesus, when he actually broke the law of Moses, excused David for doing the same and said that man was not made for the Sabbath but the Sabbath was made for man.

2. Closely tied to the preceding is our view of inspiration. Since it borders on the principle of "dictation" there is within its framework no reasonable explanation of the synoptic problem (most of our people don't even know what the problem is). Our view provides no reasonable justification for Paul saying "I think" or stating that he spoke completely on his own apart from what God would have him say. There are no answers to the challenges of modern Biblical Criticism, no explanations of such apparent contradictions as the resurrection story (one Gospel says there was one man at the tomb, one Gospel says there were two men, one says there was one angel, and the other mentions two angels.)

3. Our claim to have all of the truth is not only conceited, bordering on self-righteousness, but it prevents us from growing in understanding and gaining depth to our lives and our thinking. It destroys our personal integrity, since we warn others to beware of thinking they stand lest they should fall. We say "Let's study together. If you can show me that I'm wrong I'll change, and if I show you you are wrong, then you will change, OK?" But we have no intention of ever reexamining our beliefs; we really mean ''I'll pretend to listen to your side, but I know I'm right so as soon as you are finished I'll show you what

is really correct." We are afraid to even listen to the other side of any issue; but if we are so sure we are absolutely right, why should we be afraid of what anyone else believes? We know of other denominations only what we read in our books which are far from objective since most of them are written for the sole purpose of disproving what others believe when it differs from our beliefs. We say that others will never come to an understanding of the truth because their minds are closed, yet at times I wonder how open ours are.

4. Our attitude towards other Christian people is often far from the attitude Jesus seemed to display (see Mark 9:38-42). We say "I don't know whether others are lost or not if they are not in the church of Christ," but we mean "Actually I think they are lost but won't say it since people will think I am narrow-minded." Yet whether we say it or not people know what we think. I have heard preachers say that there were towns in the northeast with 250,000 population which had in them no more than a dozen Christians (which means there were no more than a dozen members of the church of Christ). When I hear such things I can only hang my head in shame and ask how one could prove such a statement. We assume that God will forgive us our sins of unchristian living, but will not forgive those who are not doctrinally pure like we are. I think it was Jesus who told the parable of the judgment in which the question was asked "Did you feed the poor, visit the sick, clothe the naked, give drink to the thirsty?" and not "Did you worship without an instrument and go to a church that was scripturally organized?"

5. We strain out gnats but swallow camels, a sin the Jesus accused the Pharisees of committing. He said that the weightier matters like Faith, Mercy, Justice and Love were being neglected and details were emphasized. When a preacher of ours talks about Love and Faith all of the time we fear that he is not "grounded in the truth," and call him "too liberal." In a recent sermon, typical of so many I have heard, the preacher was discussing how to recognize the church of the Bible. He mentioned such important matters as worshipping right (no instrumental music), having the church organized right, meeting on the correct day, taking the Lord's Supper at the right time, etc. I guess he overlooked Jesus' own description of His followers found in John 13. He said that the one way to recognize His disciples for certain was to see if they loved each other as He had loved them.

6. Even though Paul said there was freedom in Christ, we allow almost none. Anyone who does not conform, or who will even admit that he is not sure about some matter which we consider vital is looked upon with a critical eye. He is never trusted with teaching a class and often he is driven from the church of Christ. The disciples of Jesus were those who wanted to follow Him. He never asked that they accept a certain body of beliefs; He simply said "follow me." And who among us can decide exactly what must be accepted since we are so badly divided ourselves?

7. If our worship is in spirit and in truth, it is only because we proclaim it to be so in almost all of our Sunday morning prayers. While our people go spiritually unnourished we preach to those who are not even present. Should the preacher say something about our living, we become upset and call him nosey. Our prayers are like reading from a litany. The only difference is that we rearrange our phrases and sometimes pray for the sick and afflicted the world over *before* we are thankful for this day and all its many blessings. We make a farce out of the Lord's Supper by our efforts to get our pocketbooks and billfolds out for the collection (which many honestly consider the third part of the Communion Service.) All spontaneity is gone from our worship since everyone knows the order so well that to suggest having four songs before the sermon instead of three will bring criticism from someone for sure. (One lady thought this was unscriptural.)

8. We refuse to participate with other Christians (we call them Christians only "in the broad sense") when there is a good work to be done in the community. Our motives may have some small measure of merit, but outsiders cannot see that. All they know is that there is work to be done and everyone wants to help but the church of Christ. By refusing to "condone their errors" we give the world occasion to condemn us for knowing to do good and not doing it.

9. We are inconsistent even with regards to the slogans which we have set up to follow, and our announced principle of Biblical interpretation. We say we will call Bible things by Bible names, but even the word "Bible" is not a Bible word. We say we speak where the Bible speaks and are silent where it is silent but do neither. For example, the Bible speaks of equality of all races. I have never heard a sermon on the relationship between white and Negro, whether as fellow Christians or not, even though the matter is such an important issue in our day. I do remember hearing more than one member of the church say that he hated niggers. We allow our people to have such an attitude and are afraid to speak against it. In most of our congregations (the vast majority are segregated) if integration begins many members would quit the church.

The Bible is silent on women taking part in the worship by teaching. Therefore, we do not allow them to preach to the congregation, but we *do* allow them to sing which is described as teaching and exhorting one another. No preacher I have asked has produced the Apostolic example of women singing in the worship. These are just two of the many examples of speaking where the Bible is silent and remaining silent where the Bible speaks.

10. Our approach to the Christian life is basically negative. We derive much of our "rightness" not from what we do, but from all of the things we don't do. In fact, what separates us from the world and other churches is not the good things that we do, but the "bad" things and "unscriptural" practices that they engage in.

11. We neglect our young people to the extent that far more than half of them are lost to us before they reach the age of 21. I would not want to bring up my children in an atmosphere where all that is provided for them by the church is a word from the preacher every once in a while. And that word is almost without exception, “Be careful not to dance or park and pet, or drink, etc., etc., etc.” We usually give them no place in the work of the church and then wonder why they drift away.

12. There is almost complete absence of assurance within the churches of Christ. If someone is baptized and asks if he is saved, the answer is yes. If he asks a week later we have to say we don’t know, and through his life he is alternately saved and lost and his salvation depends on when he dies—if he has just prayed for forgiveness, fine, but if not he may be lost. Could it be that in our fight against the Baptists we have gone to the opposite extreme on the matter of Grace? We seldom talk about it and seem to have no real understanding of what it is. Paul talks about the man in Christ having his sins covered, and says, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed unto Him against that day.” Oh, that we could say the same!!

13. We are continually looking backward, seeking to walk in the “old paths.” As a result our religion becomes irrelevant to the world today. We have no answers to the vital moral and spiritual issues of the day because we are too busy fighting battles that are not being waged and building straw men so we can tear them down.

Before I conclude, I would like to mention first of all that I am aware of the fact that many of our churches *are* interested in their young people, some churches provide truly valuable worship experiences, others do participate with other churches on worth-while projects, and so on, but these are the exceptions and not the rule. Yet it pleases me to see that people are finally beginning to awake from their slumber of unconcern and maybe a new day will be dawning upon the churches of Christ everywhere.

I now join the ever-increasing ranks of those young people who wanted with all of their hearts to find a permanent place within the churches of Christ, but could not simply because they above all had to be true to the truth as God gave them to see it. We can still be wholeheartedly behind your efforts for good even though you cannot be behind our efforts, since not being fully and completely devoted to the church of Christ as you know it we are thus no longer Christians even if we are devoted to Christ. We are faced with deciding either to stay in the church of Christ and not be fully accepted or choosing another church which will undoubtedly have as many problems as the church of Christ.

I love so many of you who are in the church of Christ as I know you love me, and I would ask of you only one thing: Do NOT FOLLOW MY EXAMPLE IF YOU CAN DO DIFFERENTLY!! For I would be with you now if I could. All I would ask is that you do your part, whether small or great, to help create an atmosphere within the church of Christ which will draw men and women, young and old alike, to that better way of life both

temporal and eternal which was first and most perfectly lived by a man from Galilee two thousand years ago. Make Him live today in your heart and in your life so that He may still draw men nearer to the divine, and in so doing help to make the church of Christ truly the church of CHRIST.—*122 Carlisle, Shelbyville, Tenn. 37160*

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Things That Matter Most . . . No. 9

HOLY WORLDLINESS AND UNHOLY RELIGIOSITY

Among the sayings attributed to our Lord in non-canonical literature, sometimes referred to as *Agrapha,* there is the one in Codex Bezae that has Jesus saying to a man that he sees working on the Sabbath: "Oh, man, if you know what you are doing, blessed are you; but if you know not what you are doing, cursed are you."

This is probably a genuine saying of the Lord, for it is reflective of his attitude toward the religious systems of His time and consistent with the situational ethics that He taught. There were times when even He broke sabbatical regulations, and He dared to suggest that the doors of the kingdom might swing open to a worldly prostitute and slam shut to a religious Pharisee.

In any event the statement points to a truth that we consider vital to our time. Our "secular" pursuits may be our most holy endeavors, while our "spiritual" performances may be of little value in building the kingdom of God, yea they may even be *unholy.* The man Jesus saw working on the Sabbath was gathering wood, which was definitely against the Jewish law. Our Lord said he was blessed *if he knew what he was doing.* This must mean that if in this situation the man was placing human dignity above a religious ordinance he was justified in doing so, for Jesus had taught that the Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

Perhaps the man was gathering fire wood for a sick family or trying to make some extra money in order to meet his debts. Or it could have been that he was self-willed, defiant of authority, and irreverent toward the laws that were calculated to give discipline to his life. In that case he was cursed for his behavior, Jesus pointed out. It all depended on the intention of his heart.

Recently I read the account of the death of an aged brother. The writer observed that the man had not missed taking communion for 70 years, from the time he was immersed to the day of his death. By communion we may assume he has reference to the communion of the Lord's Supper. This is of course an impressive accomplishment, and it surely must be some kind of a record.

Let us suppose that this good brother had missed the Lord's Supper rather often, even scores of times during those 70 years. A few times he simply had to work in order to support his family; sometimes he sat with a dying neighbor who needed a friend to hold his hand; occasionally he stayed home to be with a sick member of the family. Perhaps there were still other reasons.

Would this make the brother's life any less holy? Really now, is there any virtue in such a record as 70 years of communion-keeping? Is it possible that there were times when the man would have pleased God more had he been on some mission of mercy at that hour? Might not Jesus have said to him had He met him: "If you know what you are doing, blessed are you . . ."? Might a man be *blessed* for what he is doing even when he's missing church?

During his reign King Hezekiah succeeded in restoring the passover to Israel's fading religion. But the record says "They ate the passover otherwise than prescribed." This Hezekiah realized, apparently being unable to institute all that the law specified. The king prayed about the deficiency: "The good Lord pardon everyone who sets his heart to seek God, the Lord the God of his fathers, even though not according to the sanctuary's rules of cleanness." (2 Chron. 30:18-19).

The Bible says that "The Lord heard Hezekiah, and healed the people."

Here is an example in the Bible of a man knowingly doing less than the law required, and being blessed for so doing. But he knew what he was doing! The people were sincerely endeavoring to restore the spiritual fortunes of Israel, and because of this God gladly overlooked some infractions of the rules. Just as He did when David ate shewbread and when Jesus broke Sabbath rules.

Recently my wife and I were on an errand of mercy some miles from our home, checking on the welfare of a very ill woman. Our brethren were gathering on that Wednesday night, a congregation with which we were not acquainted, only a block or so away. As we ministered to this woman I found myself asking the question "Is it not more important to be here than there?" We had missed holy Wednesday night, but were we necessarily less holy because of it? Is there any *real* importance in the saints gathering two or three times a week to hear lectures? How about having a "scattering to minister" program every Wednesday night?

But one does not have to be ministering to the sick. How about such "secular" pursuits as serving as Boy Scout leader on Wednesday night? Or playing checkers with some of the senior citizens? Or taking a gang of kids on a fish fry? (and really be like Jesus!) The brother who drives a taxi on a Wednesday night, or one who stokes the furnace at the utility plant, may be doing more real good for humanity than the brother who, bashed with religiosity, spends that time listening to a sermon. Jesus might even have him stay home

and read to his children that night, which appears to be far more holy than hauling them to another church service, which is boring to them if not to the father.

A man may so love the world that he just hasn't the time to be running to church all time. That is holy worldliness. His "sacred desk" may be the biology lab, and may be every whit as holy as a pulpit. How foolish we are to encourage men to leave such pursuits in order "to enter the ministry"! The truth is that the classroom, laboratory, factory or office are places for an effective ministry, while the pulpit is surely ineffective. A professional minister recently remarked to a schoolteacher: "You are where the young people are. We're not." The world does not gather before pulpits to hear sermons.

Let us then refrain from committing that common fallacy of confusing the secular and the spiritual. The Christian has no "secular" pursuits, for all that he does is for the Lord and the world He loves. If he is a physician, he is in the Lord's work. If he is a lawyer, he has entered the ministry just as much, and perhaps in many instances even more, as one who has "taken up preaching." Some may enter the ministry by becoming evangelists, true; but others enter the ministry by becoming housewives, plumbers and carpenters. It is God's world, and His community is to be busy making His world beautiful, intelligent, free of disease and heartache, and pleasurable. We make people like God *by* bringing them into the abundant life. This is our ministry, and this takes us into the world where the people are. We may not be *of* the world, but we are *in* it, and we are to love it like God does, and bless it by our labor of love, whatever it is. This is what it means to save people.

Religiosity, on the other hand, can be most unholy. It can kill a man's spirit just as it crucified Christ. It places law above personality and the letter above spirit. It is institutional rather than personal. It preserves "the system" to the hurt of the cultivation of the soul. It curses the man who gathers wood on the Sabbath, for it can see only law, not the difference that situations make. It counts eternal life in terms of years, not in terms of depth and breadth. It is legal, not gracious.—*the Editor*

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Review of "Voices of Concern" . . . No.9

HORIZONS UNLIMITED

JAMES D. BALES

Under the title of "Wider Horizons" Cecil L. Franklin tells us some of the reasons why he left us, and why he finally went into the Episcopal Church. We should enlarge our horizons to the extent authorized by Christ in His word, but in the Episcopal Church the horizons are unlimited by the Word of God. In speaking of conditions in the Church of England Jenkin Lloyd Jones said: "My own fellow Unitarians. . . have by their insistence

on ‘absolute freedom’ become an amorphous mass of Christians, agnostics, pantheists, atheists, communists, humanists, etc., ‘without form, and void,’ as Genesis puts it. There is a point at which belief in everything becomes indistinguishable from belief in nothing.” Franklin seems to stand against such (*Voices*, p. 180).

Franklin rightly emphasized that we should be concerned about the needs of people; such as those who are treated unjustly, those who are involved in marital problems, those who have been left alone. We agree, although this does not mean that one must endorse all that others may think on the subject of how it should be done.

Unity

Franklin grants that professing Christians should not be unconcerned about the Lord’s prayer for unity. We must not be comfortable in “sectarian security, untroubled by the divisions which separate us.” We must “fervently” pray “that the Spirit of God will further enlighten us all, and draw us closer together, and in His time reunite us.” (Voices of Concern, P. 183)

First, all who profess love for and loyalty to Jesus, and who have read that He prayed for the unity of believers (John 17:20-21), cannot love Him as they ought if they are not concerned to answer, in so far as their own lives are concerned, the Lord’s prayer for unity. Division is contrary to His will, and it is a stumbling block in the path of some who might otherwise believe.

Second, we need to pray but prayer is not a substitute for study of God’s word. Teaching not based on the Bible is not the teaching of the Spirit. The “all truth” has been delivered in the faith once for all delivered to the saints (John 16:12-13; Jude 3). What further word from God would be necessary to lead us to answer the Lord’s prayer for unity. Those who do not heed what the Spirit has revealed on this matter in the Bible would not heed if a thousand more pages were revealed on the subject (Compare Lk. 16:29-31).

Third, it is now God’s time, and has always been, for us to answer Christ’s prayer for unity. Since today is the day of the evangelization of the world, and has been since the establishment of the church, today has always been the day that the Lord wants us united so that the world may believe that God sent Him. To pray that God reunite us “in His time” shifts, consciously or unconsciously, the responsibility for and the ending of religious division to the shoulders of the Lord, instead of to man. If one does not let the Bible have the final word with him, he can always justify his denominationalism by asserting that it is not yet the Lord’s time to unite us, and why should we try to do prematurely what it is not yet the Lord’s time to do? We cannot escape in this manner our responsibility for doing what we can now to answer the Lord’s prayer for unity. And certainly each one of us can be members simply of the Lord’s church; nothing more and nothing less. We have no right

to remain in denominationalism and imply that we are waiting for further enlightenment for the Spirit, and that we are waiting until the Lord decides that it is time to do the job.

Fourth, Franklin did not make a contribution to answering the Lord's prayer for unity by going into a denominational church. Why should he think that any sectarianism amongst some professed Christians justifies him in joining a sectarian Church? Look in the New Testament as he may, he cannot find the Episcopal Church and certain of its doctrines. One does not answer the Lord's prayer for unity by taking his stand in denominationalism. Some people may be unaware of the face that they are sectarian, but the solution is not achieved by joining a sectarian organization.

Fifth, Franklin wrote as if church history was simply a great procession of which the early Christians and we are a part, and that it is all "Christian history" (pp. 183-185). He wrote as if there had been no apostasy, no falling away, from the faith. The Bible predicted apostasies (1 Tim. 4; 2 Thess. 2; etc.), and we must make a distinction between the history of the church, and the history of departures from New Testament Christianity. Franklin said: "To cut ourselves off from any of this heritage is to impoverish ourselves." (Voices, 184) . We must separate from much of church history for there is much in it in creed and conduct, in doctrine and deed, which are contrary to the teaching of our Lord. We do not minimize a study of "church history." It has such values as: (a) We may learn from the arguments and insights of others. (b) We can see in some cases in church history what the ultimate end of certain trends among us today will be if these trends are persisted in. In other words, church history can help us to realize that we may be making a new trial of old errors. (c) We can learn that our generation is not the first generation to be faced with great difficulties, trials, and tribulations. These and other things can be very helpful to us, but we can know what is scriptural not by a general study of church history but by what the Bible teaches. We judge church history in the light of the Bible, and not the Bible in the light of church history.

Franklin's Pilgrimage

Franklin traced his departure to adolescent rebellion (*Voices,* 178). Albert Clarke Wyckoff, in *Acute and Chronic Unbelief* (Revell), has a good analysis of this type of thing. Franklin "felt almost a glee in emancipation" *(Voices,* 178). When one is in rebellion against authority—whether of the home and/or of God—he usually feels emancipated, for a time, when he throws off the authority. Franklin became Unitarian in belief, but finally viewed this as inadequate and went into the priesthood of the Episcopal Church (pp. 178-179) . Although he does not think that the Church should permit any and every opinion (p. 180), he is identified with a Church which does. For decades, for example the pro-Communist Hewlett Johnson was "The Dean of Canterbury," and Pike was an Episcopal Bishop.

Franklin himself accepts modernism which undermines in varying degrees the inspiration of the Bible (pp. 177, 185-186). He stated that: “It is hard to suppose that we can be genuine disciples of Him who is the Truth at the same time that we defensively protect ourselves from what are claimed to be new discoveries of fact.” (p. 185) Christians should be receptive to facts, although some people confuse the facts and the interpretation that someone may have given them in order to make them fit his particular biases. Modernism, however, sooner or later tries to convict Jesus of dishonesty or of ignorance concerning the nature of the Old Testament and the nature of the word, the New Testament, into which the apostles and prophets of Christ were guided. We can give some examples, although we do not know some of the specific things which Franklin himself believes in these particular cases. (a) Some deny that Moses wrote of Christ, but Jesus said that “he wrote of me” (John 5:46-47). (b) Jesus quoted the Old Testament and said that it was God’s voice to them (Matt. 22:31-32). (c) Moses wrote the word of God (Matt. 15:4-6; Mk. 7:8, 10). (d) Jonah was hosted by a great sea monster (Matt. 12:39-40). (e) Scripture holds good, Jesus said. It cannot be broken (John 10:33-36).

If Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, how can we believe that he had a false position concerning the Old Testament? Can one believe that He is the Truth, and yet say that He was wrong concerning the nature of the Old Testament? If He was wrong concerning God’s work in the past, how do we know that he is right concerning God’s work in the Present?

We are not disciples of Christ, but have tried to make Him our disciple, if we claim that we know better than He the nature of the Old Testament. There are some, however, who imply that he was dishonest for they say that he knew better, but just conformed to their prejudices; and He did this in this fundamental matter of what is the word of God. What shall we say to this?

1. It is just as consistent to say that all of His word today is but His conformity to the prejudices of His day, as to say that His word concerning the Old Testament is such a conformity. How does Franklin know that Jesus’ teachings about God’s love and grace are not accommodations of Jesus to the false ideas of His day?

2. There is no proof that Jesus thus accommodated himself to the false ideas of His times. This theory of accommodation is one that some people got up to try to justify their failure to accept Jesus’ word even after they have claimed that He is the Truth, and that they are His disciples.

3. Jesus condemned the traditions of the Pharisees, and there is no indication that He avoided unpleasant truths in order to please them or to reach them. Shall we say that in such a vital matter as the inspiration of the Old Testament, that He stooped so low as to leave the impression that they were right in accepting its inspiration when He did not believe it? Christ condemned the Jews of His generations for many things; but never once

did He hint that they had too high a regard for the inspiration of the Old Testament. He often condemned their traditions, but He never suggested that faith in the inspiration of the Old Testament was a tradition of men.

4. As S. S. Schmucker pointed out, and we draw on him for the rest of the points, the language Jesus used with reference to the Old Testament when speaking to people as a whole, is "precisely the same language" which "is used by Jesus respecting the Old Testament when conversing with His apostles (Matt. 26:24, 31; Luke 22:37, 24:44-47), and even in His prayers to His heavenly Father (e.g. John 17:22)."

5. "The moral character of Jesus and His apostles, renders such a supposition inadmissible."

6. "The supposition, that Jesus and His apostles propagated falsehoods under the garb of truth, is overturned by the fact that miracles evinced their authority as teachers."

7. "No sure criterion can be given which shall enable us to distinguish between those of their declarations which they believed themselves, and those in which they accommodated themselves to the erroneous notions of the Jews. . . The theory of accommodation involves the whole of revelation in uncertainty."

8. Wherein Jewish opinion was right, Jesus agreed with it. He accepted truth even when held by hypocrites (Matt. 23:1-4).

9. "The necessity for such accommodation on the part of Jesus and His apostles cannot be proved." *(Biblical Theology,* 1826, pp. 228-230).

Can one be a disciple of the Lord and presume to teach Jesus? Can one hold Jesus as the Truth, and yet convict Him of teaching falsehood? Christ has stood the test of centuries. Thus when there seems to be a conflict between Christ and some "fact" someone has brought forth today, we have either misunderstood what Christ taught, or we have misunderstood the "fact." But if Christ actually teaches something, we must hold to it regardless of how many people say that the facts prove otherwise. It is possible to reject Him, and to refuse to be His disciple; but how can we be His disciple and still think that we can instruct Him more perfectly in matters?—*Harding College, Searcy, Ark.*

A NOTE ON THE INCARNATION

CECIL FRANKLIN

It was with a large measure of reluctance that I wrote my original essay. In that I tried to be relevant and unargumentative. It is with a larger degree of reluctance that I reply to Dr. Bales' critique. Again I shall try to be relevant and unargumentative.

Without attempting to reply to every point of the critique, I choose one area of Christian doctrine that appears to be crucial and pivotal of some of our differences: the doctrine of the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ.

For the first several centuries of the Christian era there was much controversy about precisely who and what Jesus Christ was and is. The writings of the apostolic age—the writings that were in the process of becoming accepted as Christian scriptures, books of the 'new covenant'—were taken as authoritative for the question, but the statements on the subject there did not answer all the questions that Christians asked.

Christians came to say, on the basis of these writings, that Jesus Christ was true God and true man. The term 'Son of God' had to be taken as somehow figurative, since it could not have quite the same *literal* sense in the context of monotheism, which was held by Jews and Christians, as it might have had in the context of pagan polytheism.

But the idea of one person who was true God and true man presented and presents some serious questions. We believe that God is infinite, but man is finite; God is omniscient, but man's power is narrowly circumscribed. It would then appear that, humanly speaking (the only way, after all, we can speak), the idea that one person is both true God and true man is a logical contradiction. I think it is for this reason that Christian theologians came to speak of certain Christian doctrines as 'mysteries', to indicate that there are truths which the limited mind of man cannot fully grasp or comprehend. Indeed, if God is infinite, and man's mind is finite, we should be chary of any fully comprehensible formula that purports to convey the reality of God. I am inclined to think that some of the views that were rejected by the early Church—views of such men as Arius, Apollinaris, Nestorius, Eutyches—were rejected in part because they were too neat and too comprehensible.

Although the Church did arrive at a kind of formula—that Jesus Christ is one person with two natures, divine and human—even this does not answer all the questions that can be asked. The Church rejected the view that Jesus Christ consisted of a divine being merely inhabiting a human body (an oversimplification of the view of Apollinaris). But what, for instance, of the knowledge of Jesus? God knows everything. What shall we say of Jesus when he appears to ask a question for information: that he already knows the answer, but is merely indulging in play-acting? This would seem to give to the whole story and to Jesus' true humanity a kind of unreality.

If this is granted, we are in the situation of trying to reconcile two factors: (1) Jesus' knowledge was limited; (2) as the Son of God, Jesus came to bring the word of God. Although the second of these is something believed by all Christians, it ought not to be unduly exaggerated. Most Christians (excepting old-fashioned liberals) would see the central point of Jesus' mission not in what he taught, but rather in what he did, in his full self-giving obedience to the Father, for the sake of mankind.

If Jesus' knowledge was limited, it would appear useful to consider the nature of that limitation. I am under the impression that most of Jesus' contemporaries thought the earth was flat, and the heavenly bodies revolved around it. If this is true, I am inclined to suppose that Jesus also thought that. In fact, it would seem reasonable to suppose that Jesus was limited quite like his contemporaries, except to the degree necessary to perform the mission for which he had been sent.

Paul wrote that Christ 'emptied himself' (Phil. 2:7, R.S.V) in becoming man. It is not entirely clear what Paul meant, but if we take this Statement as authoritative, it suggests some real limitations of the man Jesus Christ. In this context, there is no intolerable threat in the idea that Jesus held beliefs about the books of the Old Testament that are subject to modern scholarly investigation. According to the doctrine of Incarnation, God came to man through true man.

The belief in Biblical infallibility can be interpreted as denying the legitimacy of rational and empirical investigation of those areas that are normally subject to that kind of investigation. Some misguided Christians in the later middle ages denied the legitimacy of this kind of investigation of the notion that the earth revolves around the sun. One might wonder about a doctrine of revelation that sees God as revealing truths that *are* of such a sort as to be subject to this kind of investigation.

There are many Christians who do believe the tenets of the historic Christian faith, believe that God revealed himself in events in the history of Israel and preeminently in Jesus Christ, and believe that the Bible is indeed the word of God, without holding a doctrine of Biblical infallibility which adjures the processes of critical historical and literary investigation. What is saddening is that some Christians hold a rigid doctrine of Biblical infallibility that isolates them from the world of scientific scholarship, and an equally rigid type of Biblical interpretation which keeps them separated not only from those Christians who do not share their belief in Biblical infallibility, but even from those who do. It is in this context that I make a plea for 'wider horizons'.

Supplementary Note. Dr. Bales's quotation from Jenkin Lloyd Jones is somewhat puzzling. Dr. Bales quotes correctly from *Lutheran News,* but I think the information must have become garbled somewhere upstream. 'Jenkin Lloyd Jones' is a name famous in American Unitarianism: he was a prominent Unitarian minister (originally from England) in Chicago around the turn of the century. It may be that he has a namesake in the ministry of the Unitarian Church in England. An Anglican would not say 'my own fellow Unitarians' when 'speaking of conditions in the Church of England'.

It would not, of course, be hard to find a quotation from an Anglican making criticisms (with which I might agree) of affairs within Anglicanism. In any event, that is not the point at issue.—*University of Denver, Denver, Colorado*

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In the December issue James D. Bales concludes his year-long review of *Voices of Concern* with a piece on Milton Stolz's essay about the Holy Spirit. You will be interested in what Brother Bales says and in Brother Stolz's response.

Other articles will include "What Is True Greatness" by Guy Land, an elder at Wynnewood Chapel, and one by a well-known writer among Churches of Christ, who will presently write *nom de plume.* You will not want to miss his provocative piece.

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